

10th Annual Command and Control Research and Technology Symposium:
The Future of C2

Multinational Force and Host-Nation Administration in Wartime Iraq, an
Inter-ministerial Approach

Topic: C4ISR/C2 Architecture: A Case Study of Iraqi-MNF Interoperability in Iraq

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Problem or Issue: Modern multinational operations frequently require the integration of coalition, host nation and friendly forces and resources to achieve strategic objectives. Although multinational warfare is not new, some of the processes used during operation Iraqi Freedom were quite innovative – particularly those focused on the rebuilding of Iraqi institutions and cities. The focus of this study is the cooperative construct used by United States and Iraqi governments at the tactical, operational and strategic level to restore essential services and stability in Al Anbar province, Iraq.

Relevance to Command and Control: During Iraqi Freedom the First Marine Expeditionary Force employed multinational command relations involving coalition partners and the host nation forces and created cooperative relationships with Iraqi political structures, creating some very complex but workable architectures. These working relationships were critical to success in the restive Al Anbar province and were exemplified during the battle for the city of Fallujah, operation *AL FAJR*.

Approach to the Topic: Using first person interviews and units histories, this study will identify the strengths of the command relationships used during operations in Fallujah, and particularly after the termination of combat. In particular it will illustrate the political relationships formed at the local, provincial and national level to plan and execute the restoration of democracy to the city.

Results: The arrangements developed during operation *AL FAJR* can serve as an example during future military operations where political coordination is particularly crucial.

Operation *AL FAJR* (New Dawn) had for its objective the destruction of the terrorist element in the Iraqi city of Fallujah and the peaceful restoration of the town to its residents. Fallujah was important to the overall campaign in Iraq because it had become a significant terrorist strongpoint and had large symbolic importance because it was the single city in Iraq that seemed to resist all efforts of the Multinational Force (MNF) and the Iraqi government to cleanse it of anti-Iraqi influence. As the planning for the battle proceeded, it also gained importance as the first major battle in Iraq that was directed and controlled by the newly installed Interim Iraqi Government (IIG) of Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. Due to its scope and degree of success, *AL FAJR* provides a number of important lessons to be learned for any future multinational combat operation, particularly in the area of multinational command and control.

As the high intensity combat in Fallujah drew to a close in mid-December, 2004, it became clear that the battle had achieved many of its tactical objectives and served to illustrate a number of key facts that would be important for the future of the MNF campaign in Iraq. Among these were the importance of integrated (MNF-Iraqi) force structures and command and control, and the great value of conflict termination planning and civil military operations. With the victory gained by operation *AL FAJR* and the subsequent successful election held in January 2005 the future course of the war in Iraq changed significantly.

Background on the Fallujah Area of Operations

The city of Fallujah sits on the east bank of the Euphrates River only 35 miles west of Baghdad. Although population figures for Iraqi cities are imprecise at best, most analysts accepted that over 200,000 Fallujans lived in the city prior to the start of the 2003 war in Iraq. The city has no real natural resources, but does lay across the traditionally important lines of communication that link the Iraqi capital with Syria in the west and Jordan to the north. It is midway between Baghdad and the provincial capital of the Al Anbar province, the similarly restive Sunni city of Ramadi. By most accounts even Saddam Hussein had trouble dealing with Fallujah and bought the cities loyalty with passive acceptance of the smuggling trade, which brought it much of its prosperity.

After portions of the Al Anbar province were taken under the control of special operations forces during the early weeks of operation Iraqi Freedom, the first American force to really control the area around Fallujah was an Army Armored Cavalry Regiment. After a short time, that unit was replaced by elements of a single brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division, which were encamped just outside the city. During November 2003 a CH-47 helicopter of the 82nd was shot down by a shoulder fired anti-aircraft missile from the area north of Fallujah. This confrontation set off a period of tension that caused the Army units to effectively withdraw from Fallujah. One of the key lessons of any insurgency is the absolute requirement to remain engaged with the local population – this in order to prevent the insurgent from freely swimming in the ocean of local support. Without regular access (and to be frank the 82d was far too over extended to be present in all the tense areas of the province), the influence of the MNF slowly but precipitously dropped in the passing months. When the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF)¹

assumed control of the region from the 82nd in March of 2004, relations with Fallujah were limited and constrained at best.

Unfortunately, very soon after taking over responsibility from the 82nd, the newly arrived 1st Marine Division was directed to execute operation *VIGILANT RESOLVE*², the destruction of the insurgency in Fallujah. This was in direct response to the killing of four Blackwater contract employees who ventured into Fallujah in a convoy during the morning of 31 March 2004. These contract employees were ambushed and killed on the main street of Fallujah; their bodies were burnt and later hung from the girders of the old bridge leading west out of the city. This incident horrified the world and directly affected the pace and conduct of counter-insurgency operations by the MNF in Iraq.

The irony was that the Marines had arrived with a very different and more integrated approach to their mission in mind, yet this chilling act quickly drove them into a much more traditional assault on the city, which began on 5 April – within a few weeks of their arrival. As with any combat operation in urban terrain, the toll on the civilian population was nearly unavoidable and its effects had a profoundly negative effect on the international media and the Coalition Provisional Authority – the national authority in Iraq at the time. By 8 April, with bombs being dropped in the city, senior officials were questioning some of the tactics used in the fight. Very quickly the Iraqis near the seat of government in Baghdad urged restraint and began negotiations with the insurgents. Soon, the CPA, under the leadership of Paul Bremer, directed that some halt to the operation be developed in order to reduce the perceived civilian damage. At noon on 9 April, the momentum of the operation was stopped through a “temporary halt to offensive operations.” By 13 April high-level negotiations had started and the operation to destroy

the insurgents was effectively on hold. On the 16th of April negotiations on Camp Fallujah³ between the locals and the MEF developed the idea of a Fallujah Brigade to clean up the city, under the command of a local, retired Iraqi General. By April 22 a cease-fire was in effect in the city.

From that point the situation only grew worse. The fighters inside Fallujah were reinforcing their positions. They were using mosques and hospitals as defensive positions and some analysts believed they would use the local residents as human shields when combat resumed. The insurgents clearly understood that civilian casualties and MNF attacks on mosques and other normally restricted targets played very well in their favor in the international media. Great political pressure began to be applied to cease and further combat and seek a negotiated settlement. Although the cease-fire held for some weeks the local national guard brigade quickly showed itself to be unable to oppose the Sunni anti-Iraqi forces in the town and soon thereafter dissolved as an effective military force. At the same time, the police in Fallujah, which were never very supportive of the coalition, began to side more and more with the insurgent and AIF forces that gathered in the city.

By June it was clear that the city was no longer open to the MNF and its patrols. Insurgents increasing controls the daily life of the residents of Fallujah and communications with the MNF leadership in the area became strained and then infrequent. The Fallujah Liaison Team site had been opened outside Traffic Control Point 1 (TCP-1) to facilitate dialog between the city and the MEF leadership, but TCP-1 itself became one of the most dangerous locations in the world, taking daily indirect fire and small arms attacks.

Through July and August insurgent forces had an increasingly free run of the city, and over time Fallujah became an area restricted from MNF ground and air movement effectively blocking military transportation from using Route 10 from Baghdad to the provincial capital of Ramadi. Over time the insurgency in the city expanded its influence to surrounding areas and troop movement anywhere near Fallujah became risky. In August anti-Mahdi Militia⁴ fighting in nearby Najaf took the attention of the world off of Fallujah for a few weeks, but the influence of the insurgency that “turned back the Marine assault” only grew.

The next major shift in the situation in Fallujah occurred when Lieutenant Colonel Sulimann of the Iraqi National Guard was kidnapped and killed by insurgents in the city. He was a local national guard battalion commander and the first aggressive Iraqi officer to really stand out in his efforts to return order to Fallujah. When he was kidnapped in August and tortured to death, the MNF leadership saw that no local success was likely in the city. From that point forward the focus of effort was to restore the peace through military means. A concurrent operation in the Shia city of Najaf that same month demonstrated for the first time that some Iraqi forces would fight against insurgents, but only if they were recruited from other areas of Iraq and only if they were closely integrated with MNF units.

Shaping Operations prior to the Assault

With the clear lessons of Vigilant Resolve in mind the MEF realized that continued pressure on Fallujah might not be soluble by negotiations and that plans for a second military assault needed to be refined. One key different in any future attack would be the effort to split the AIF from their popular support base and a parallel reinforcing

effort designed to draw the civilian population out the city in advance of the fighting. If the population voluntarily left their homes, it would benefit the MNF in three critical ways. First the incidence of civilian casualties would be reduced, and that would protect the MNF leadership from efforts to stop the assault. Second, the AIF forces would be increasingly less well hidden and sheltered by innocent civilians and precision targeting could take greater effect in the city. Finally the shaping forces had a tendency to draw out enemy forces so that they could be positively identified and attacked. On many occasions ground forces would make feints along the south and eastern sides of the city to draw out the enemy defensive forces and allow us to identify their key forces, defensive structures and C2 nodes. Finally, the shaping actions of the MNF helped deceive the enemy as to the actual point of the attack. The insurgent leadership could have no doubt that the attack would come, but the constant probing of the shaping phases helped convince them that the main attack would come again from the south and east, as had been the case in *VIGILANT RESOLVE*.

Isolation: In the immediate hours prior to the start of the assault on Fallujah the MEF concentrated its efforts on isolating the city from the insurgency. This isolation was critical to prevent to escape of the insurgents in the city and to ensure that AIF forces would not be able to reinforce their forces. Using the “Blackjack Brigade” from the 1st Cavalry Division, the Division cut and controlled all the roads leading to Fallujah, then moved a light armored task force including the Iraqi 36th Commando battalion up the peninsula west of the city to effective seal it off. Once the city was surrounded⁵ the main combat forces of the 1st Marine Division moved into place all along the northern edge of Fallujah.

Meanwhile attack air support continued to attack known locations of enemy forces and to strike any AIF units that posed a direct threat (these included berms designed to aid the AIF attack and weapons caches, as well as crew served weapons.) Using intelligence gathering capability the MEF also attacked positively identified enemy locations when collateral damage could be minimized. The overall effect was to break up the AIF command and control structure in the city and to destroy force and positions that could threaten our forces.

Combat Operations

Attacking with two Regiments side by side, the 1st Marine Division led its assault with Army mechanized and armored battalions followed closely by Marine infantry battalions with Iraqi army companies integrated inside their structure. This enabled the shock effect of the armor to combine with the large numbers of “boots on the ground” required for urban combat and facilitated clearing of sensitive Iraqi sites, such as mosques with Iraqi soldiers. The full integration of four Iraqi battalions was a first for combat in Iraq and provided a great combat power multiplier as well as an important symbol to the Iraqi people. The MEF also fully integrated airpower from all four US Armed Services as well as numerous tactical sensors (such as Pioneer, Scan Eagle and Predator), intelligence sources (HUMINT, COMMINT and SIGINT), and special operating forces (whose snipers were particularly valued.) Some buildings in the city were cleared multiple times. The tank was used often and with telling effect. Indirect fires from 155mm artillery positioned less than 5 kilometers away in Camp Fallujah were used on a daily basis before during and after the heaviest period of fighting. Frequently small unit leaders would push “stacks” of Marines or soldiers into buildings while employing

laser-guided bombs, artillery and tank main gun rounds on adjoining structures. The combat bulldozer was used by combat engineers and SeaBees on several occasions to push the walls of buildings in on stubborn defenders. Insurgents used uses, armor piercing bullets and even sewed grenades inside their clothing to kill and maim MNF troops at any opportunity.

Most of the enemy in the northern sections of the city were quickly overrun. They were locally recruited thugs and criminals with little stomach for the horror of urban warfare; in the southern half of the city though, MNF forces found much more determined defenders, dug in in-depth with reinforcing positions. These were manned by the hard-core members of the insurgency, most of whom still lay buried in or near Fallujah. Due to the MEF's shaping operations, the enemy expected an attack from the south and it was in that section of the city that they fought hardest. As a consequence most of Fallujah south of the main avenue was severely damaged.

Operation *AL FAJR* employed traditional tactics as well as some very innovative procedures and command structures. The MEF planners understood well the discontinuous nature of the modern battlefield and the need for flexibility in execution. It was planned that civil affairs teams and combat engineers would follow in trace of the lead combat battalions to begin assessment o critical infrastructure and to facilitated population of resource control for any civilians in the city. Because *VIGILANT RESOLVE* had been halted due to widespread negative media attention, the planners of *AL FAJR* wanted to ensure that collateral damage was minimized and civilians could be cared for or evacuated as soon as possible. This was on reason that the city general hospital was one of the first objectives of the attack. The tactical CA teams were also

used with effect to manage detainees captured in the fighting and to facilitate burials for local fighters who were killed. An aggressive public affairs (PA) stance was also critical to the maintenance of popular support. This in turn helped assure the maintenance of Iraqi government resolve to conduct the fight. This was after all, the first major battle authorized and directed by the Interim Iraqi Government of Prime Minister Ayad Allawi. As the installation of democracy in a unitary Iraq was one of the major goals of the war, the success of that first government was considered crucial.

The initial objectives of the attack were accomplished early and the entire city was under MNF control after four days of very hard fighting. Although small pockets of determined, even suicidal insurgents would continue to fight for nearly a month, the MEF staff began to focus on the vitally important transition to local control during the first week of combat. The city needed to be secure and made safe, essential services had to be restored to minimal levels and the residents of the city had to have some semblance of normalcy in their lives before the promise of freedom from insurgents would have any meaning. This was the real test of *AL FAJR*.

The basic concept of the operation depended upon a series of transitions, from combat, to restoration of security and essential services to resettlement and return to local control by an Iraqi municipal government. Minimum requirements for conflict termination were identified prior to beginning combat operations. These included a non-local police force to enter the city⁶, a civilian or military mayor to manage essential services in the city and a package of reconstruction projects designed to restore the city's infrastructure to pre-conflict levels rapidly after the terrorist influence was destroyed. These prerequisites were briefed all the way up the chain to the Prime Minister of Iraq.

The transition from combat operations to restoration of essential services and humanitarian assistance was envisioned to be spatial not time based. In other words while fighting was continuing in some areas of the city, where possible MNF and Iraqi forces would be rebuilding pump houses and electrical substations in an area not far away, and in other location within the city military forces would also be providing humanitarian relief supplies to the remaining Fallujah residents.

In practice, this conditions-based conflict termination process worked rather well, but it did suffer from some significant challenges. First of all, the agreed upon prerequisites were never completely met. The Interim Iraqi Government of Ayad Allawi did appoint a military governor, then Major General Abdul-Qater, but his authority in the city was never clear. Perhaps more importantly, the Minister of the Interior flatly failed in his commitment to bring in police forces from outside the city. Iraqi, coalition soldiers, to include two battalions of newly formed public order troops, were used instead to provide the police function in the city for several months. Finally, both the MNF and the IIG did commit funds for the city's restoration, but initially there was no coordinating mechanism to determine who should accomplish which essential project and in what order projects were to be completed. It will surprise no one to know that the MNF and Iraqi priorities for restoration were different.

Coalition C2 Processes

What became crucial to the successful resettlement of the city was the formation of several multifunctional working groups that served as control mechanisms for the return of stability in Fallujah. These were working-level, coalition command and control (C2) processes that facilitated unity of effort at tactical and operational levels. The first of

these mechanisms was a coalition military C2 node giving the MNF operational command new authority over Iraqi units and institutions. It was formed when General Abdul-Qater arrived at Camp Fallujah to assume responsibilities as the military governor of Al Anbar province. As such he had authority over all MNF forces in the province and more importantly everything in the city of Fallujah. He was hosted by (and his meager staff was supported by) the I MEF headquarters. The newly combined headquarters arrangement made complete integration of the Iraqi Security Forces within the MNF structure possible.

The Multinational Security Training Command Iraq (MNSTCI) had been formed to assist in the development and training of the Iraqi security forces. It provided two liaison officers to General Abdul Qater, but had no staff resources to provide him, and neither did his own government. In particular he needed a broad range of administrators and representatives from the various national ministries to function effectively as a military governor. For example, he needed immediate support from the Ministry of Interior (MOI) so that he could manage police and local security issues. Since he did not get any real support from the MoI for several months, he had to formulate many basic security policies, such as weapons handling, curfew and vehicles use rules without Iraqi legal advice.

General Abdul-Qater proved to be a brave and cooperative commander who soon was a strong advocate for the operation with his government and spokesman for the operation's success in the international media. He worked closely and well with the MNF chain of command, yet always retained an independent decision making role. Because he was not completely dominated by the MNF⁷ and had the respect of his subordinate

commanders he accomplished many difficult tasks that would have been impossible for the MNF commanders to do on their own.⁸ He also worked with the MEF staff to develop rules of engagement for the battle and rules that the Fallujah residents were required to follow upon their return. These rules included restrictions on weapons, a curfew and prohibitions of anti-Iraqi activities. The rules were harsh, but well founded, and surprisingly none of the residents disputed them.

Still, as valuable as he was, General Abdul Qater did not feel comfortable making civil decisions. He was not a Fallujan and had no experience in civil administration. He was particularly reluctant to accept responsibility for financial and police functions. In the initial planning for the operation, the MEF staff had clearly stated the need for a mayor and local police force in the city at the conclusion of offensive operations. Unfortunately this never materialized and the structures put in place to manage the combat operation and reconstruction of the city had to be used for local administration.

Luckily, the MEF Civil Affairs Group had created a Municipal Support Team (MST) designed to assist in the initial civic reconstruction. The MST included a public administrator, a public works engineer, a security officer and a judicial officer. Although designed for work in the city, the MST began working first as an adjunct to General Abdul Qater's tiny staff, helping him formulate answers to problems that occurred during the fighting. These included the delivering of humanitarian assistance supplies and the use of Iraqi security forces to prevent looting.

This small MST team worked tirelessly for months after combat drew to a close to pull city administrators together to prioritize reconstruction projects. Over time they also took on the responsibility of bringing Sheiks, Imams, and local leaders of various groups

together to develop some sort of a city council. The Prime Minister pressed for a city council rather than a single mayor so that broad based support could develop in the city.

Over time the MST became the motive force within the city. It mentored Iraqi technocrats and leaders and assisted Basil Mahmoud, the appointed Iraqi reconstruction director, in his many varied tasks. With the addition of US Navy Seabees and their construction engineering expertise on several working groups, the MST played the critical tactical role of developing governance, consensus and progress in the city.

The Inter-ministerial Fallujah Working Group

The second key mechanism for the coordination of effort in *AL FAJR* was an interagency working group that operated at the operational level and linked issues in Fallujah with intergovernmental support through the MNF military headquarters and the US and UK Embassies. This Inter-ministerial Fallujah Working Group operated through twice weekly meetings. The first was always held in Fallujah, initially on Camp Fallujah while combat operations continued, and then later within the old Fallujah Mayor's complex at the MEF Civil-Military Operations Center (CMOC). The second was always held in Baghdad, normally at the Ministry of Industry and Minerals, whose minister was appointed as the lead agent for Fallujah reconstruction. Though many individuals attended both these meetings their focus and authorities were quite different. The local Fallujah meeting was designed to provide the administration and technical expertise to manage the city's affairs. It was led by Engineer Basil Mahmoud of the Ministry of Industry and Minerals, who for several months was in effect the city manager of Fallujah. He had the authority to establish priorities and direct local reconstruction activities by the various Iraqi government institutions. He was assisted everyday by the MEF Municipal

Support Team. During November MEF Civil Affairs officers effectively directed the affairs of the city while combat operations were the focus of effort, but by January, as the residents were beginning to return Engineer Mahmoud had grown to be the key Iraqi figure in the city and the manager of daily activities.

The Baghdad meeting was normally chaired by the Deputy Minister of Industry and Minerals, Mr. Mohammed Abdullah Mohammed. Minister Mohammed Abdullah was a career bureaucrat of real skill, who had survived under Saddam Hussein and into the Interim Iraqi Government. He ensured that the policy makers within the council of Ministers were executing the work and following the priorities required in Fallujah. Using personal authority alone, he managed to gain resources from many of the resource poor ministries in Iraq to help the reconstruction in Fallujah. Military representatives attended both these meetings and acted as a sort of connecting file at the local and national level.

The one gap in coverage of this two meeting process was at the provincial level. Like most nations, Iraq has a strong provincial government function, where national policies are adapted to more local needs. For the operation in Fallujah, the provincial government was in Ramadi, only 30 miles away, yet unfortunately, the appointed Governor there was never very well integrated into the coordination process. Initially, the civilian governor was so repressed and intimidated by insurgent threats that he played no visible role; afterwards, Prime Minister Allawi appointed a new Governor, Sheik Fassel al-Goud, but he only attended one meeting in Fallujah and did nothing to assist in the reconstruction effort. His provincial Directors-general could have added much to the

recovery process but we effectively isolated from the most pressing issues because the Governor was not interested and the national government in Baghdad was absorbed by it.

Another important shortfall in this structure was the lack of any functioning Iraqi Civil-Military coordination. It took the Prime Minister's personal involvement to get the Ministry of Interior or Ministry of Industry to work directly with the Ministry of Defense of any of its subordinate command elements. In practice, this meant that the MNF pulled together any inter-ministerial coordination that did not occur in either the local Fallujah meetings or the Baghdad Reconstruction Working Group. With no forcing function behind the scenes it was extremely difficult to develop in any real consensus in the early months. Only after some reconstruction headway was developed and significant funding was made available, did any proactive ministry coordination begin on the part of the Iraqi leaders. Publicity certainly helped this as Fallujah was on every media outlet in the country, but it was progress and money that really made the difference.

Lessons Learned

As with any issue of management, **planning ahead** for multinational relationships is fundamental. Without the creation of the MST, the MNF would have been plagued with no real hub for its local control mechanism. Like every other facet of war, planning assumptions are never completely fulfilled, but some structure and process is required to begin any coordinated activity on the scope and scale of post-conflict operations. In the multinational arena, an understanding of the local culture helps greatly to properly anticipate requirements. The MNF knew well they needed to gain the buy-in of the Sheiks and Imams of Fallujah, the city of mosques, before any sustainable progress

would be made. Working groups eventually proved to be the answer, but only after much trial mentoring.

Structure was crucial at both the local (city) level and the national level in Baghdad and a **coordinating process** linking the two was fundamental. As is often said, all politics is local, but in Iraq only leaders in Baghdad had any authority or financial power. Therefore every important issue needed to be considered at both levels. Having several of the same members working at both the Fallujah (local) meeting and the Baghdad (national) meeting helped. But there were still many issues where no agreement was easy. Each ministry had different priorities and very different understanding of the real situation in the city of Fallujah. One of the real values of the Fallujah meeting was its setting. No one who visited the city could fail to observe the situation there and be moved by the basic needs of the population.

Responsibility and authority had to be matched for any management mechanism to work. Basil Mahmoud was appointed quite early in the process as the senior representative of the Minister of Industry and Minerals. That Minister was the government lead for Fallujah reconstruction; still Basil's real authority over other ministry functions (power generation, sewage treatment, fuel distribution) was uncertain at best and almost always too weak to generate real action in the early days. Without a single (FEMA-like) agency and no real recent experience in the reconstruction of a city, the Iraq government was extremely ponderous in its responsiveness. Only after Basil became first among equals and was empowered to spend national funds did he gain the authority that matched his huge responsibility.

Civil-Military relationships had to be created where none existed before. In wartime, the civil aspects of any endeavor must be linked to security and the role of the military. In the case of AL FAJR, the Iraqi military was present in all phases of the battle and the reconstruction, but in relatively small numbers. They were also plagued by a hold-over from the former regime – a reluctance on the part of the local residents to trust their motives.

As combat operations in Fallujah drew to a close in January 2005, the tactical success of the Iraqi Security Forces and the MNF was clear, but the success of the reconstruction effort remained uncertain. At the end of January, the residents of Fallujah voted in greater numbers than in any other city in the province. Such voter participation in a city still under military control sent a strong signal to the national government. Soon Baghdad increased its level of effort in the processes of reconstruction and by early March had committed over \$200 million in reconstruction funding. Such success within less than six months after combat operations began was a clear testament to the value of the multinational command and control processes that facilitated the reconstruction of Fallujah. Those processes directly supported the MNF campaign in Iraq. The importance of integrated (MNF-Iraqi) force structures and command and control, and the great value of conflict termination planning and civil military operations were clear to everyone in the area of operations.

Notes

¹ The First Marine Expeditionary Force was composed on one Marine Division, one Marine Aircraft Wing, one Marine Force service Support Group, and additional attachments, including one brigade of US Army soldiers. Later other units would augment the MEF; however, the Division remained the primary ground combat unit of the MEF.

² Operation *VIGILANT RESOLVE* was directed on short notice, to be executed in less than 5 days, with the goal of capturing or killing the insurgents responsible for the killing of the American contractors. It was also designed to re-establish law and order and prevent Fallujah from acting as a sanctuary for the anti-Iraqi forces. *VIGILANT RESOLVE* was essentially a two-battalion attack, although four Iraqi battalions had been requested in support.

³ Camp Fallujah, not to be confused with the city itself, was a former Iraqi army training center designed for the use of an Iranian unit loyal to Saddam Hussein. It was a well-designed and organized military camp, located on the main highway less than 5 miles from the city.

⁴ The Mahdi Militia was the military arm of the followers of Muqtada Al Sadr a young Shia religious leader. They effectively took control of the central part of the holy city of Najaf and began to conduct sharia courts and kill accused violators of religious law. This began only days after the arrival in theater of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, commanded by Colonel Tony Haslem.

⁵ The city was never completely surrounded because the Euphrates River provided an entry and exit avenue that could not be effectively blocked – even by Marines. Some terrorists undoubtedly escaped the fighting by using the river.

⁶ Local security forces in the Sunni areas of Iraq had proven time and again to be dominated by tribal loyalties to the point of being ineffective impartial police.

⁷ General Abdul Qater was completely dependent on the MEF staff for everything from communications to food, yet he frequently demonstrated his independence of mind in briefings with the commander of the MNF, General George Casey, the US Ambassador, John Negroponte, and even his own Minister of Defense.

⁸ For example, the “no weapons” policy he directed in Fallujah was an exception to the policy everywhere in Iraq and would certainly have been opposed had it been announced by a US commander.